

**Written testimony submitted by Lisa Phillips to the Education Committee in support of
Raised S.B. 1138, An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws. Friday,
March 11, 2011**

I was born and grew up in East Hartford, Connecticut, graduating from East Hartford High School in 2000.

I know first hand the devastating effects bullies can have on their victims. In elementary school I was put on medication which caused me to gain weight. Boy, did I pay the price for that weight gain. I also had a learning deviation, so I had classes away from the main class room, which contributed to making me an easy target for bullies.

I was bullied in the East Hartford School system from elementary school, at Thomas S. O'Connell Elementary School, until my freshman year at East Hartford High School.

At O'Connell Elementary School the mother of one of my classmates called me a tank in front of my classmates. Later that day, when my mom picked me up from school and I told her what was said to me, I burst into tears. My mom spoke to the principal and asked for help, but it did no good. The school did nothing. The school acknowledged that Mrs. Ramsey was a known problem and that my mom wasn't the first parent to ask for help because of her.

My mom thought that if she explained to Mrs. Ramsey how painful what she said to me was, and told her about my medication and the unfortunate side effect of gaining weight it might help. The woman wouldn't speak to my mom, and she actually threatened to call the police on my mom for coming to her front door without permission.

Some of the kids at Thomas S. O'Connell Elementary School who heard Mrs. Ramsey call me a tank teased me about it unmercifully for many years. It was terrible having to listen to their taunts. I tried to turn a deaf ear and tried to act like it didn't hurt, but it did hurt. It hurt a lot. It was scary that no one at the elementary school would protect me.

One evening when we were at an elementary school event I pointed out one of the bullies to my mom and older sister. My older sister, who at that time was in middle school and very tall, walked up to him, looked down at him and said "So you're the *little* kid picking on my sister." Then simply turned and walked away. Thanks to my sister he never bothered me again.

When I was in middle school, there was one morning at the bus stop the bullying, by one boy in particular, was so severe toward another girl and me that a man driving the recycle truck on his rounds through the neighborhood stopped and waited with us until the bus arrived to pick us up.

That night I told my mom about what had happened. The next day, after she drove me to school, she called the principal to let him know what had happened and contacted the other girl's parents to suggest they also contact the principal. This time something was done. The consequence to the boy who bullied us was that he could not ride the bus for one month.

The bully's parents called the other girl's parents and asked to meet with them to discuss the situation. His parents talked (bullied) the other girl's parents into calling the principal and

withdrawing their complaint. The bully's parents then convinced (bullied) the other girl's parents to call my mom and tell her to withdraw her complaint because it was inconvenient for them to drive their son to and from school. As you can imagine, that did not sit well with my mom. She stood by me and refused to back down. She told the other girl's parents that she understood it was inconvenient for the bully's parents to have to drive their son to and from school each day. She reminded them that if he had behaved properly he would still be able to ride on the bus.

Through all my years of being bullied, while I was at school in the bullies' presence, I tried to put my best face forward and not let them know how much their taunting hurt. I tried to let it roll off my back. I won't kid you, it all hurt. It was terrible. I dreaded going to school.

Please do everything you can to strengthen Connecticut's school bullying laws and protect Connecticut's kids from bullies.

Thank you.

Lisa Phillips